

Dinner Remarks, Takahiro Shibata, Director-General, Urban and Housing  
Department, Hyogo Prefecture

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Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for sharing the precious time and giving me the opportunity of making a speech. I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation to you, American people, for the warm support of both matter and mind on the occasion of the great earthquake.

Before I start my speech, let me tell you a pleasant news, that is, California State and Hyogo Prefecture have just concluded An Agreement for Cooperation on Disaster Management between the State of California and Hyogo Prefecture with the signature of Dr. Andrews on it. We are very pleased to have the first good result of this conference, and we will serve for the prevention of disaster through the tight cooperation between us.

On the morning when the earthquake broke out, my body was suddenly lifted up, and I still remember such a feeling of jumping up and down strongly on a trampoline. "This is a dream." I thought. I never dreamt that the solid earth would start the unbelievable quake. That was the beginning of the Hanshin-Awaji Great Earthquake which recorded the tremor of the 7<sup>th</sup> degree of the seismic intensity and the greatest casualties after the World War II in Japan.

The moment I noticed that was the earthquake, everything on the earth was destroyed and lost its life. I don't know how to explain the fear which attacked us. Though it is said the length of the tremor was about 20 or 30 seconds, I felt it was much longer.

As soon as I realized my life was relieved, I suspected the thirteen stories government building had fell down. Because I lived close to the building, I hurried to open the window and look out for it, and I found the sight of the government building standing in a dignified manner with all its lights up in the midst of darkness. My mind was filled with relief. I guessed the emergency battery worked.

After it became lighter, when I went out to get the bearings of the situation, I couldn't believe of my own eyes. There lied the sight of such a miniature town trampled down. Many houses and buildings were crushed into any different shapes. Fires had started here and there, water was sparking out, the smell of city-gas filled the air, and people were standing in dumb surprise. As if it were the sight just after a heavy air raid. The beautiful city of Kobe had become a sort of ruins on the spot.

Vice-Governor was standing alone in the gloomy room with broken windows of the government building, which I had suspected it had been all right, was like a wreck and hardly stood. Only two of us decided the foundation of the Calamity Countermeasures Headquarters, and I went by car to provide a transportation to Governor whom we was unable to get in touch with.

I took him to the government office after many difficulties of getting through the clamed up traffic under buildings leaning down and rails of lines hanging down from guards. Then we opened the first meeting of Calamity Countermeasures Headquarters. The attendants were only five persons, say, Governor, Vice-Governor and Directors of three Departments including me.

Let me explain about the restoration which was really tough on that day. The severe cold wind was blowing through in the room, electricity was not supplied and telephone and TV systems were out of order. We understood it was tremendous calamity but did not know the real situation at all. Time was passing with anxiety and irritation. Any trial to contact with National Government, City Authority and Police Headquarters were vain. Every communication system was broken out. We were just in the vacuum of information.

In cases of former calamities, they happened in limited areas and headquarters got all information. However this case was different. In usual daily life, we live surrounded by all kinds of information and we are accustomed to such a life, though it is certainly difficult to choose appropriate information we need from so much information. But, anyway, it was our first experience to decide and take action without any information for the earthquake.

Although people in Tokyo always prepares for earthquakes, we had not get ready to and prepare for them at all. We were like a troop which was suddenly attacked by enemy and tried to get hold of their position to attack back against them.

We made every effort, and, as the result, we gradually started to know the situation. We asked the Deputy-Chief Cabinet Secretary and Deputy-Minister of Construction for aids of National Government by a public phone. Around noon TV system began to work and we got the whole situation at last. Though we did not know, mass media had all ready provided news all over Japan using helicopters. Highways collapsed at

many points and cities were like a hell. Towns were filled with noise of sirens and helicopters. I was only gazing with tears at the downtown burning all night long without knowing what to do.

I, as Director of Construction, started what we should do. First was the emergency check of danger of each building to prevent the second calamity would occur. Secondly, we started to construct temporary houses for sufferers. Because only about ten percent of 400 staff of the Construction Department was able to come to the office, in the evening when the telephone system relived, we contacted with executives and ordered them to make contact with every staff and come to the office even on foot. Many staff walked through the destroyed towns for many hours to reach the office.

Cooperating with Kobe City, we started the check houses against the second calamity with the support of National and other prefectural governments. Each team of two persons checked dangerous buildings around and put stickers of "Keep out" on them. After they came back to the office, we had a meeting. Inhabitants were excited and staffs were mistook with thieved at a fire and had many troubles with them, we collected as many official armbands as possible and wore them following morning. We were seriously anxious about accidents by falls of glassing and materials, and gas explosion, but fortunately there did not occur serious one.

As to emergency temporary houses, with cooperation of National Government, we had Japan Prefabricated Houses Association prepare for the construction. On January 19, two days after the earthquake, we collected all stock of temporary houses all over Japan, ordered the construction of 3,000 temporary houses, and started the construction on January 20. Because the refugees were over 300,000, we estimated 10,000 temporary houses were needed at least and made an additional reservation of 7,000. However they did not receive the reservation. The reason was as like that.

The case when the most temporary houses were constructed before was the one by a volcano explosion in Kyushu in 1993. But the total number of the houses were only 1,500. In addition to that, because temporary houses to be constructed over 3,000 were unable to be supplied as stock and should be newly produced shifting all production lines of factories into temporary houses. That was why the reservation of 7,000 was not received. So I promised them that we would buy them all anyway though we did not have budget for them.

My largest problem was how many temporary houses we should make, and it was impossible to figure out the accurate number. Then we started sampling survey of the demand from refugees 3 to 4 days after the earthquake. We collected about some thousands samples out of them, that means a few samples per one thousand, and estimated the number of family houses as 60,000, namely 60 % of total families of refugees. I was very shocked at the number.

The whole Japanese domestic productivity of temporary houses was 10,000 a month, and that meant it would take half a year at least to produce 60,000 temporary houses. It was impossible for elder people who were worn out in the cold weather to wait for such a long time. I had thought we should have completed the task by the end of February or March at latest.

I reported Governor, who was at the head of command staying at his office day and night, that it would be a greatly heavy task and one mistake should have to course an inextricable confusion. And I received his decision that, in addition to 30,000 public houses offered by other prefectures, we would construct another 30,000 temporary houses to secure 60,000 houses in total.

The limitation of construction was two months, namely, by the end of March. That was very difficult, because security of lots for construction was almost impossible in such a city packed with houses as Kobe as well as making sure of labor and materials. And we anyway realized the whole construction by means of utilizing every little open space in and out of the city.

Finally we constructed 50,000 temporary houses including 3,000 from the U.S.A. by July and had spent 1.3 to 1.4 billion dollars in several months.

Another difficulty was the operation of letting refugees move to those temporary houses. The remote places were not popular. We thought pensioners would be willing to move into houses outside of the city, but that was totally our misunderstanding.

It was also difficult to decide tenants. Although there was some opinions that we should choose them by drawing, I made it my mind that weak people, namely

handicapped persons and elder people, be prior. By the methods many problems would be expected to occur, but I decided to think running.

I have coped with many problems, that was city reconstruction, construction plan of permanent houses and its execution etc., with the cooperation of everybody. Just after the earthquake, people of every field, including national government, hastened to come and help us. I was very glad to have their help. They did not have places to stay in, they spent nights with blankets on them. Now I do understand the meaning of the sentence that a friend in need is a true friend.

At the end of my speech, let me touch on staff of mine who have worked without sleeping or resting. I am very proud of them who did their best for recovery and reconstruction despite the working condition was messy and awful as in a battle field and they had also lost their own houses. I was anxious that they would fall in ill watching the staff who had black-pale faces and coughs working in the condition of lack of sleeping and exhaustion, and coldness.

In spite of these bad situation, they were all right when the tension continued for the first 6 to 7 months. Some executives, however, got physical trouble in heart or in other innards and were hospitalized for weeks or for months. Fortunately they are all out of hospital and work in good condition now.

In those days I thought my body would burst out in spite of repletion of my spirit, but luckily I did not hurt my physical condition: I got silver mesh beautifully in my black hair though. I dearly remember those days we spent being beside ourselves without bathes and warm foods.

Reconstruction does not merely mean the material rebuilding. The real meaning of reconstruction, I think, is how they helped each other and how much they deepened their ties with families and people in the communities then. In that sense, I believe the area had good experience and will revive after 5 or 10 years.

I sincerely hope your successive warm cooperation. Thank you.